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GILA COUNTY DIVISION of HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

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"Improving the Quality of Life for all Residents"

Press Release, For Immediate Use
April 25, 2006

Gila County Department of Health Cautions Residents About Ticks

Warmer temperatures mark the start of tick season. The Gila County Department of Health would like to remind residents to take precautions against tick bites and the diseases that the ticks might carry, including Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever, until recently, has been rare in Arizona and undetected in Gila County. The Department has been involved in the investigation of at least two (2) confirmed cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever in the eastern portion of Gila County.

The tick must be attached and feeding for several hours for disease transmission to occur. Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which usually begin 3 to 14 days after a bite by an infected tick, include moderate to high fever, severe headache, nausea or vomiting and muscle pain. In approximately 85 percent of cases, a rash appears about three days after onset of illness. People experiencing any of these symptoms within two weeks of a possible tick bite should see a doctor immediately. Rocky Mountain spotted fever can be treated with specific antibiotics if diagnosed early.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever Prevention

1. Eliminate ticks on pets and on your property
2. Check yourself and children after recreating in areas suspected to harbor ticks
3. Remove ticks promptly and properly
4. While in areas suspected to harbor ticks, use insect repellent
5. Keep a clutter free yard
6. Keep grass and weeds cut

The proper way to remove ticks

1. Use tweezers to grasp ticks by mouth parts as close to skin as possible and pull back gently. Or, use your finger nails covered w/ tissue paper. Avoid squeezing the body of the tick, if possible.
2. Immediately wash the bite site with soap and water.

For additional information regarding Rocky Mountain spotted fever in Gila County please call (928) 425-3189, or if calling from the Payson area, 1-800-304-4452 extension 8811.